Procurement of rubber by STC

3078. SHRI N.K. PREMACHANDRAN: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government propose to declare statutory price for rubber;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether the State Trading Corporation discontinued the procurement of rubber at present;

(d) if so, whether Government consider to insist the STC to commence the procurement; and

(e) if so, the reaction of Government thereto?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI DIGVIJAY SINGH): (a) and (b) In obedience to the orders of the Hon'ble Kerala High Court, Government have initiated action to notify Minimum Price for Natural Rubber under Section 13 of the Rubber Act, 1947.

(c) Yes, Sir.

(d) No, Sir.

(e) Does not arise.

Stabilisation in price of cement

3079. SHRI PREM CHAND GUPTA: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that faced with the threat of a sharp drop in demand for cement, producers are planning to stop production to ensure stabilisation of price at the viable rate of Rs. 150 per bag; and

(b) if so, the details of action Government are taking to prevent cartelisation of the industry?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (DR. RAMAN): (a) and (b) Production of cement has a tendency to keep low during the

monsoon, *i.e.* July to September because of suppressed demand. The production picks up as a result of improved demand after monsoons as shown in the table given below:

(In Million Tonnes)

Month	Production				
	1997-98	1998-99	1999-2000	2000-01	2001-02
April-June	18.97	19.93	24.46	25.47	26.36
July-Sept	16.87	17.75	20.93	21.56	7.36
Oct-Dec	19.33	20.18	22.53	22.62	(July)
Jan-March	21.57	23.81	26.29	25.87	—
					—
TOTAL:	76.74	81.67	94.21	93.52	—

The normal seasonal fluctuations in the production of cement shown above do not suggest cartelisation of the industry.

The price of cement is not uniform throghout the country and varies from State to State depending upon local taxes and distance from the production centres.

Irregularities in Tobacco Board

3080. SHRI YADLAPATI VENKAT RAO: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether irregularities in Tabacco Board have been reported by the Andhra Pradesh Tobacco Growers Association; and

(b) if so, the action proposed to get the matter probed by the CBI?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI DIGVIJAY SINGH): (a) No, Sir. No irregularities have been reported in the Tobacco Board by the Andhra Pradesh Tobacco Growers' Association. However, the